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Letter dated 16 May 2003 from the Permanent Representative of Georgia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to write to you the context of the forthcoming consultations on the conflict in Abkhazia, Georgia, and, through you, to draw the attention of the Security Council to the developments in the conflict settlement process, as well as outstanding concerns.

Preceding this month's discussion, two important events have taken place — the high-level brainstorming session in Geneva, on 19 and 20 February 2003, of senior representatives of the Group of Friends of the Secretary-General and United Nations officials, and the Sochi meeting between the Presidents of Russia and Georgia, on 6 and 7 March 2003 — to give new impetus to the peace process in Abkhazia. The high-level session in Geneva set an important milestone in the process of conflict resolution in Abkhazia, Georgia: it reaffirmed the centrality of a political settlement on the basis of the paper on the distribution of constitutional competencies and provided for further institutionalization of the peace process by recommending the establishment of three task forces. The Sochi meeting and its outcome marked intensified efforts of the Russian Federation aimed at the revitalization of the process of settling the conflict in Abkhazia, in particular in terms of economic measures and the return of refugees.

In addition to these positive changes, there are areas of concern that merit the attention of the Security Council.

The United Nations-sponsored paper on the distribution of competencies, backed unanimously by the Security Council, still cannot find its way to the Abkhaz side. The Abkhaz side continues to obstruct the start of political negotiations on the basis of the paper and refuses to accept the document, maintaining that Abkhazia's independence is a fait accompli. In parallel, since 2001 the Abkhaz side has been refusing to participate in the meetings of the Coordinating Council. Recent statements of the Abkhaz side on its readiness to resume participation in the Coordinating Council proved yet again to be mere rhetoric aimed at stalling.

This situation is compounded by the process of illegally granting Russian citizenship to the population of Abkhazia, unlawful economic activities and the acquisition of properties in the region by physical and legal persons under the jurisdiction of the Russian Federation. These actions violate not only Georgian and Russian legislation, but also numerous decisions of the summits of the Commonwealth of Independent States.

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Furthermore, in breach of commitments made at the 1999 Istanbul summit of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Russian military base in Gudauta, in the zone of conflict, still continues to function.

All these actions violate Security Council resolutions on the conflict in Abkhazia, Georgia, in particular resolution 1462 (2003), in paragraph 2 of which the Council reaffirmed "the commitment of all Member States to the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognized borders, and the necessity to define the status of Abkhazia within the State of Georgia in strict accordance with these principles".

As the situation in Abkhazia, Georgia, remains complex, we believe that only through the reinvigorated and strengthened United Nations-led peace process can we achieve a comprehensive settlement of the dispute. To this end, the implementation of the recommendations of the Geneva session of 19 and 20 February, which provided an overarching, all-inclusive structure for negotiations on political status, as well as on the situation of internally displaced persons and economic issues, could and should play an indispensable role.

In this respect, we appeal to the Group of Friends and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to intensify efforts to make the best use of opportunities opened up by the brainstorming session in Geneva. This would provide for greater and more active involvement of the Security Council in the peace process in order to secure steady progress.

I should be grateful if you would have the text of the present letter circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Dr. Revaz **Adamia**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative